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“Renaissance” Vet Offers Perspective on Diverse Career

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by Patrick A. Mahaney, V'99

Dr. Sally Walshaw's interest in all animal species has provided her a life of diverse experiences in veterinary medicine. She is currently the acting director of University Laboratory Animal Resources at Michigan State University. Dr. Walshaw grew up in Nebraska, moved to New York as a high school senior, and received her B.A. in biology from Manhattanville College in Purchase, N.Y., in 1966. Dr. Walshaw worked as a lab assistant in biochemistry for the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Institute in New York City, where an advisor suggested she further her education through a master's degree.

In 1968, she received a M.A. in biology from Hunter College in New York City. Dr. Walshaw's graduate work developed her interests in comparative biology, such as species characteristics, physiology, and ecology. Her interest in becoming a veterinarian stemmed from her perception that “veterinary medicine offered a scholarly opportunity and a practical approach to problems in various animal species and ecosystems.”

Dr. Walshaw then pursued a veterinary education as an in-state applicant to Cornell University. According to Dr. Walshaw, a professor on Cornell's admissions committee told her, “you have an excellent academic record, it's too bad that you are a woman.” Although her first choice school rejected her at a time when women were not admitted in large numbers to veterinary school, Dr. Walshaw was Penn's gain in 1971.

As a student, Dr. Walshaw felt that Penn's veterinary program was designed to “give her the best education possible,” and she enjoyed positive experiences through the School's faculty-student mentoring program. She viewed her elective classes and rotations as opportunities to optimize her limited experiences with large animal species. Dr. Walshaw received her V.M.D. in 1975, and completed a small animal internship at Penn in 1976.

Dr. Walshaw explored clinical work at a private practice in Michigan, and then began her long-standing association with Michigan State University (MSU), teaching in the veterinary technology program from 1978 to 1987. In 1987, Dr. Walshaw accepted the position of

training coordinator for the laboratory animal unit at MSU. She views “teaching as a joy and privilege.” Currently, she is an associate professor of small animal clinical sciences, teaching undergraduate, graduate, post-doctoral, and veterinary students to refine their laboratory

Life Sciences, providing services to the undergraduate, medical, veterinary, and nursing colleges. In 2000, she became the acting director of University Laboratory Animal Resources at MSU, involving the management of laboratory animal care. She oversees an outreach program



Photo courtesy of Greg DeRulter, Lansing State Journal

promoting public understanding about laboratory animal medicine through tours of the facilities. As a writer, Dr. Walshaw has co-authored *Manual of Clinical Procedures of the Dog, Cat, and Rabbit*, contributed chapters on Rabbit Behavior and Rabbit Euthanasia in

animal techniques. Students and faculty practice first on a variety of models, such as homemade, baby-sock, mice models, before performing procedures on research animals.

By comparing experiences with her Penn classmates, Dr. Walshaw realized the importance of the human-animal bond among those who enter the field of veterinary medicine. She finds “many aspects of the bond fascinating,” considering that the bond is not exclusive to any particular species. Involved with human-animal bond activities since 1981, Dr. Walshaw has been the secretary for the American Association of Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians since 1997. She also provides presentations on animal death and human emotion for pet owners, veterinarians and veterinary technicians, laboratory animal workers, and animal shelter workers. In addition, she has a strong interest in the humane treatment of laboratory animals.

Dr. Walshaw also is an adjunct professor in the MSU Center of Ethics and Humanities in

the *Manual of Rabbit Medicine and Surgery*, and published articles in scientific journals.

Dr. Walshaw lives with her husband, Richard, whom she met during his residency in small animal surgery at Penn. Richard is the section chief of Small Animal Surgery and a professor in the Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences at MSU. They have a daughter, Patty, who graduated in 2001 from Penn and who is now studying at Temple University to be a psychologist, and a son, Dan, who is in high school. Dr. Walshaw looks forward to retirement, as she hopes to study Spanish and an Asian language. Additionally, she intends on further exploring her interest in all species through hiking and aquatics expeditions.

Patrick Mahaney is a veterinarian practicing emergency medicine and surgery in Rockville, Md. Patrick lives in Washington, D.C., and enjoys the city's many cultural offerings and yoga studios.